

## **Talking Points**

### **Bathing Beach Monitoring Program**

### **Travertine and Rock Creeks**

#### **When can we swim in the creek?**

Water samples are taken weekly and sent to Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality laboratory in Oklahoma City. Test results are received via fax at Headquarters within 24 hours. The results are posted on the park's website at [www.nps.gov/chic](http://www.nps.gov/chic).

Bacteria levels may fluctuate from day to day. When collected samples exceed E. coli limits, the public health standard requires that the previous four weeks be averaged with the current readings to monitor long term trends. If the five week average is above the action level, the beach remains posted until it is below action level. If the five week average is below the action level, the notices signs would be removed and would take place at the end of each week.

#### **Other visitors are swimming in the creek. Is it safe?**

Chickasaw National Recreation Area post notices to inform the public and to allow visitors to make their own decisions about how to recreate in the park safely.

**Notice sign:** Bacterial levels exceed National Park Service standards for beach recreational use. Because of the increased risk of contracting an illness, the National Park Service advises against swimming in the stream until further notice.

#### **Where are the samples taken and where are the notices posted?**

In popular swimming areas along Travertine and Rock Creeks

All swimming areas downstream are posted below any sites that have five week average readings above action levels.

#### **Is Lake of the Arbuckles tested?**

Not routinely. We do occasional sample in Veterans Lake and Lake of the Arbuckles. Public health standards do not require testing of e.coli in large bodies of water.

#### **Why does Chickasaw National Recreation Area test for E. coli?**

We sample and test water to determine the levels of bacteria that might indicate the presence of disease causing organisms.

#### **Has the park tested for E. coli before? How long has the park tested for E. coli?**

Since 2001, we sample and test water in popular swimming areas along Travertine and Rock Creeks to determine the levels of bacteria that might indicate the presence of disease causing organisms.

**How often do the elevated levels of E. coli occur?**

Elevated readings have been recorded during high use periods, after heavy rainfall events, and during periods of extended drought. Since 2001, we have been posting notices along the creek(s) when elevated readings occur.

**How long is the monitoring period? Do you test year round?**

The water quality monitoring program continues during the summer swimming months, and a standard operating procedure for beach posting is in place.

**What are the sources of E. coli?**

Microorganisms, including E. coli bacteria, are found in every part of our environment.

E. coli bacteria naturally occur in the gastrointestinal tract of humans and many other warm blooded animals. These bacteria aid in the digestion process and usually cause no harm. However, their presence in a water system is an indicator that other potential disease-causing pathogens may be present. Certain diseased animals may pass along these pathogens in their fecal waste products.

A few of the sources of E. coli contamination include: Domestic animal and wildlife waste, sewer overflows, seepage from septic systems, and runoff from surrounding streets and agricultural facilities. In addition, other human influences such as infants entering the water in diapers, or the over crowding of a given swimming area can lead to elevated bacterial levels.

**Possible illnesses:**

Recreational activities in bacterially contaminated waters can result in severe infections of the eyes, ears, nose, and throat. Typhoid fever, viral and bacterial gastroenteritis, and Hepatitis "A", are potentially contracted from contaminated water.

Children, pregnant women, and elderly persons are the most susceptible.

Contact your primary health care provider.

**For more information**

Contact Headquarters 580/622-3161 or Travertine Nature Center 580/622-3165.

An informational letter is available upon request. Please send name and mailing address to Chickasaw National Recreation Area, 1008 West Second Street, Sulphur, OK 73086.